



Westmeath County Council Scrutiny Report

NOAC Report No. 78



Chair's Opening remarks

The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) is the national independent oversight body for the local government sector in Ireland and was established over a decade ago under the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

NOAC's functions are wide ranging, involving the scrutiny of performance generally and financial performance specifically, supporting best practice, overseeing implementation of national local government policy and monitoring and evaluating implementation of corporate plans, adherence to service level agreements and public service reform by local government bodies.

I began my tenure as Chair of NOAC in September 2018 and have continued the important work commenced by the previous NOAC Chair in reviewing the performance of the individual local authorities in Ireland.

These individual reviews, which are called the Scrutiny Process, allows NOAC to provide a comprehensive overview of the functioning of local authorities to the public, both positive and negative, and allows for exemplars of best practice to be identified and used to share with other local authorities.

The first cycle of the Scrutiny Process was completed in September 2024 with 32 reports being published over that period, which are freely available on the NOAC website.

Following the completion of the first round of the Scrutiny Process, the NOAC board and I decided to conduct a review of the system in place and build on the excellent and valuable work already undertaken.

This has resulted in a new Scrutiny Process, which I feel, allows for a more detailed analysis of the performance of local authorities, along with a more structured format similar to the Oireachtas Committees.

As part of laying the groundwork on the new process, NOAC prepared a protocol document of the new Scrutiny Process, which lays out how meetings and engagement with local authorities

would function and this was agreed to by the County and City Management Association. NOAC also conducted a data protection impact assessment of the new process to ensure that GDPR and personal data rights are respected.

With that in mind, NOAC has decided to record the meetings that are uploaded to the NOAC website, along with a transcript. This allows meetings to be as open as possible and gives the public an even greater insight into the performance of their local authorities.

In terms of those meetings, I have been very impressed with the engagement we have received from local authorities. The Scrutiny Process is an excellent arena for the public to see how the local government sector works for them, highlighting the excellent work being carried out, as well as the challenges being faced.

Further, the process allows local authorities to see how they are performing on a national level, as well as providing the opportunity to view areas of good practice that they might adopt in their own localities, allowing for a virtuous cycle of improvement.

I look forward to continuing to work closely and collaboratively with all the local authorities and want to use this opportunity to thank all the Chief Executives and their teams for the time and courtesy and the welcome extended to NOAC in this process.

Michael McCarthy
NOAC Chair
31st October 2025

Background

A core function of NOAC is to review the individual performance of local authorities in accordance with its statutory functions under the Local Government Reform Act 2014. This key NOAC process began in February 2017 and NOAC completed its first cycle of this process with the publication of the last of its 32 reports in September 2024. This ended the first cycle of this process with all local authorities having been reviewed and those findings being published.

The first cycle involved a number of stages, which included a face-to-face meeting with the Chief Executive and some of the Management team of the local authority with the Chair of NOAC and the Secretariat, a meeting between the Chief Executive and some/all of the Management team of the local authority with the full NOAC board and the publication of a report (Scrutiny Report) on the NOAC website.

In preparation for the meetings and as part of these reports, NOAC drew up a comprehensive profile of that particular local authority. This profile presented an analysis of data obtained from the various reports that NOAC had undertaken and other available information. The data collected is used to look at trends as well as to compare how local authorities are doing nationally.

This process allowed NOAC to provide a comprehensive overview of the functioning of local authorities to the public, both positive and negative. It allowed for exemplars of best practice to be identified and shared with other local authorities, as well as possibly being highlighted in the NOAC Annual Good Practice in Local Government Seminar.

Following the completion of the first round of the Scrutiny Process, the NOAC board decided to review the process in place and build on the excellent work carried out thus far.

The result of this work is the new NOAC Scrutiny Process, which includes a more detailed analysis of the performance of each local authority and a more structured format similar to the Joint Oireachtas Committees.

Further, the NOAC board decided to allow for a more open platform to enable greater access to the meetings between the NOAC board and the local authorities. This includes the recording of all meetings in the Scrutiny Process that are uploaded to the NOAC website, along with a transcript of the meetings.

The board also decided that it would provide further information on the process via the preparation of a report on each individual review, which is provided herein.

Recording and Transcript

The NOAC board met with the Chief Executive of Westmeath County Council, Barry Kehoe, along with a number of the Westmeath County Council Management Team on 23rd September 2025 in the Custom House, Dublin.

A recording of the meeting, as well as a copy of the transcript, can be freely viewed by the public on the NOAC website at www.noac.ie with a copy of this report.



(L-R Back Row): Anne Haugh, Declan Breathnach, Noel Harrington, Miriam McDonald, Brian Cawley and Kathleen Holohan of the National Oversight and Audit Commission.

(L-R Front Row): Jackie Finney (Director of Services Housing, Community, Arts and Libraries and the Municipal District of Athlone-Moate), Deirdre Reilly (Director of Services Climate Action, Environment, Water Services, Corporate Services, Human Resources and Emergency Services and the Municipal District of Mullingar-Kinnegad), Michael Hand (Director of Service Finance), Jean Ryan (Director of Services Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Capital Projects, Economic Development) and Barry Kehoe (Chief Executive) of Westmeath County Council.

Other information

As part of the Scrutiny Process, NOAC has provided the below information regarding the meeting between Westmeath County Council and the NOAC board.

This includes:

- ▲ A profile document prepared by NOAC for the meeting with Westmeath County Council that contains information from NOAC reports and further information provided by Westmeath County Council,
- ▲ A copy of the invitation letter sent to Westmeath County Council, and
- ▲ A copy of the Chief Executive's opening statement provided to NOAC as part of the meeting.



A decorative graphic on the left side of the page, consisting of a series of overlapping green parallelograms and rectangles of different shades, creating a dynamic, architectural pattern.

Westmeath County Council Profile Report

Background

The National Oversight and Audit Commission invited Westmeath County Council to attend a meeting in the Custom House, Dublin 1 on the 23 September 2025.

The purpose of the meeting is to review the individual performance of Westmeath County Council in accordance with NOAC's statutory functions.

As part of this process and as agreed with the NOAC board, the Secretariat has prepared this profile report using data collected from the NOAC Performance Indicator Reports and the past Scrutiny report of Westmeath County Council. It will use other sources of information such as NOAC's own reports including its Internal Audit report, Corporate Plan report and any other relevant available data.

The meeting is an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of the performance of Westmeath County Council. It also allows NOAC to compare Westmeath County Council's performance to that of other similar local authorities, as well as historical trends.

The meeting with NOAC will provide a picture to the public of where the local authority is performing well and where it may wish to improve its performance. By highlighting such issues, NOAC can encourage local authorities to strive to improve their performance or highlight to other local authorities where it is doing well, which in turn, can allow for collaboration on good practices.

Summary Performance Indicator Data

Below is a list of Performance Indicator data, which highlights key national indicators and standout items from the NOAC Performance Indicator Report 2023, as well as comparing national and historical trends.

- ▲ **Housing.** Westmeath County Council owned 2,362 social housing dwellings at the end of 2024 (H1) with a vacancy rate of only 1.23%, which is the third lowest in the country. The national average is 2.75% across the sector. In comparison, in 2023, Westmeath County Council owned 2,275 social housing dwellings (H1) with 1.32% vacant, compared to a national average of 2.81% (H2). The cost expended on having dwellings re-tenanted averaged across all dwellings re-let was €16,394.75 (H3B) in 2024. This is the third lowest cost amongst all local authorities, where the average was €31,136.29. This figure compares to €15,713.76 for Westmeath in 2023.
- ▲ **Homelessness.** Westmeath's long term homeless adults' figures (H6) have increased significantly, at 63.29% in 2024, in comparison to 40% in 2022 and 36.92% in 2023. The national average figure for 2024 is 59.43%.
- ▲ **A new indicator, H7 Social Housing Retrofit,** was introduced in 2024 for the 2023 Report. This ensures that the social housing stock is upgraded and will assist in meeting the carbon target for 2030. Westmeath had 83 completions in 2024, compared to 109 completions in 2023.
- ▲ **Vacancies.** In 2024, the average time for rehousing in vacant properties in Westmeath (H3) was 31.57 weeks, which compares favourably to the national average of 35.56 weeks.

In 2023, the average time for rehousing in vacant properties in Westmeath (H3) was 34.39 weeks, which was very similar to the national average of 33.72 weeks.

- ▲ New house building inspections were 23.56% (P1) in 2024 in Westmeath compared to the national average figure of 16.76%. In 2023 Westmeath's inspection rate was 16.61%.

The maintenance cost per unit was €1,419.81 (H4) in 2024 compared to €1,064.09 in 2023. For 2024, the national average maintenance cost amounted to €1,824.17.

- ▲ Rented dwelling inspections. The number of private rental inspections carried out in Westmeath decreased from 818 in 2023 (H5) to 608 in 2024. The national mean rose from 1,626.97 in 2023 to 2,002.74 in 2024.

- ▲ Roads. In terms of road condition, Westmeath had 38.92% of its local primary roads (R1b) having no defects, compared to a national average of 29%. Regarding its local secondary roads (R1c), 32.99% had no defects, which compares to the national average of 22.86%. 32.84% of Westmeath's tertiary roads had no defects, which is actually the second highest among all local authorities in this category. This compares to the national average of 21.11%.

Regarding road licensing and inspections (R4D), Westmeath had only inspected 4% of licenses in 2024. R4D is the percentage of licences that have a local authority inspection carried out at any stage after the licence is granted and prior to it entering the Guarantee Period. The Department of Transport set a minimum inspection target of 40% for this category and the national average in 2024 was 19.84%.

- ▲ Fire service. In 2024 it took an average of 6:14 minutes to mobilise the Westmeath part time fire brigades for calls to fires, (F2) an improvement on the 6:28 minutes of 2023. In 2024, the average mobilisation times for the part time fire service across local authorities stood at 5:47 minutes.

Westmeath had a cost per capita for providing the fire service (F1) in 2024 of €44.72 (€36.64 in 2023). This compares to a national average of €56.52 in 2024.

In the case of Westmeath, the percentage where the first fire tender attendance took longer than 20 minutes for fire incidents (F3) was 18.72% for 2024, slightly higher than the figure of 19.31% in 2023.

For all other emergency incidents, the percentage where first attendance took longer than 20 minutes was 23.53%.

- ▲ Libraries. Westmeath had 3.08 library visits per head of population in 2024 (L1a), ahead of the national average of 3.0. This was a marginal decrease over Westmeath's 2023 figure, which stood at 3.16 visits.

Westmeath also recorded 362,603 items (L1b) issued to library borrowers in 2024, slightly below the 365,651 items borrowed in 2023.

- ▲ WTEs. In 2024 Westmeath had 499.34 staff members (C1), a slight increase on the 496.58 staff members in 2023. The mean number of staff across all local authorities in 2024 was 1,041.09.

- ▲ Job creation. 2,459 jobs (J1) were created nationally in 2024 with the assistance of the Local Enterprise Offices, a substantial increase on the 2,131 jobs created in 2023. Westmeath created 184.99 jobs in 2024, per 100,000 population, with the assistance of the Local Enterprise Office, the highest figure amongst all local authorities. This represents an increase from the 150.69 jobs it created in 2023.

- ▲ Sick leave. Westmeath's medically certified sick leave rate was 3.78% (C2) (compared to 2.87% in 2023), making it one of the local authorities which did not meet the public sector sick leave target of 3.5%. The national average for 2024 was 3.71%. Westmeath's self-certified sick leave rate was 0.39% in 2024, compared to the national average of 0.34%.

- ▲ Technology & Social media. The per capita total page views of Westmeath's websites (C3a) in 2024 was 15.6, which compares to an average of 12.65 across all local authorities. The per capita total page views of Westmeath's websites in 2023 was 11.48, which compares to an average of 13.36 across all local authorities.

- ▲ Pollution. The total sum of pollution cases in respect of which a complaint was made (E2A) as of 31/12/2024 was only nine, which is the lowest among all local authorities. The average figure is 216 across the sector.

From records, it is clear that commercial rate collections have climbed steadily over the years. There was a small drop in 2020, but rates climbed again, reaching 97% in 2024, considerably above the national collection rate of 90.4%.
- ▲ Public liability. In 2024 Westmeath had a cost of settled claims per capita of €14.29 (M3), while the national average is €13.74. This is a large increase from the €9.76 cost in 2023.

Rent collections having stayed static over the period, being at 97% in 2043. This is above the national average, which stands at 87.4% for 2024.
- ▲ The percentage of households availing of the 3 bin service (E1) was 60% in 2024, compared to 72.69% in 2023. The national average figure was 70.16% in 2024.

Housing loans have improved over the years, climbing from 97% in 2017 to 102% in 2024, much above the national average of 87.5% in 2024.
- ▲ Planning. Westmeath had 28 planning appeals to An Bord Pleanála (P2) in 2024. 71.43% of its decisions were confirmed by Westmeath, with or without modifications.

Collection Rates

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Commercial Rate collection rates	97%	96%	95%	90%	81%	85%	83%
Rent collection rates	97%	97%	98%	98%	98%	98%	97%
Housing loan collection rates	102%	102%	98%	100%	104%	99%	97%

Westmeath County Council General Information

Below is general information provided by Westmeath County Council covering a list of relevant topics and issues.

Local Authority	Westmeath County Council
Population	96,221 (2022 Census)
Area	1,756 sq km
Municipal Districts	Athlone Moate Municipal District Mullingar Kinnegad Municipal District
2025 Budget	€117,150,517
Number employed @ 31/12/2024	499.34 (WTE)
WTE Staff per 1,000 population	0.00519 (499.34/96,221)
% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave	3.78%

Housing Information @ 31/12/24

Local Authority Stock number	2,362
Number currently on waiting list	1,511
HAP Tenancies	861
Homeless presentations	79 classified as homeless
Any specific housing issues	Westmeath County Council is striving to deliver more housing across all tenure types to meet the needs of the people of the county. However, the pace of housing delivery and the limited supply of private rental property at reasonable rents is putting many families and individuals under severe pressure. It is hoped that the strong pipeline of housing that is permitted and under construction will alleviate these issues over time.

Short Information Paragraph

Council Mission Statement	To represent, lead and serve local communities and to enhance the quality of life for the people of Westmeath by promoting the sustainable development of the county and delivering efficient and inclusive services. (Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029)
Economic Forum (CEF)	Westmeath and Roscommon County Council prepared an Economic Development Strategy for Athlone and established an Implementation Group for this, consisting of various representatives from the public and private sectors. The Group meets quarterly and is independently chaired. The economic development of the remainder of the county is managed through normal council structures including MDs, Council, SPC and ongoing engagement with development agencies.
The Local Enterprise Office	LEOs, as the first stop shop locally for businesses, support the growth and resilience of small businesses by: • driving decarbonisation and exploiting the accompanying opportunities; • enhancing competitiveness through digitalisation and innovation; • driving and assisting new business start-ups and entrepreneurs; • supporting the locally traded sector to thrive.
Retail Incentives	The County Retail Strategy aims to continue to sustain and improve the retail profile and competitiveness of County Westmeath, through the consolidation and environmental enhancement of town centres and settlements and by improving the quality and choice of retail developments on offer. Various incentives and supports are available to retail businesses in the county. These include grants for shopfront improvements, energy efficiency advice and financial support, business advice, training, and mentoring along with financial digital supports to complement their retail offering.
The Corporate Plan	The Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029 was adopted by the Elected Members in February 2025. The plan sets out the policy objectives of the Council for the next five years in a structured format that is easily understood. It will be the primary driver for the preparation of the Annual Budget, Service Delivery Plans and the Strategic Workforce Plan, through which the Council aims to achieve its objectives. The plan includes a framework for the implementation, monitoring and review of these objectives, which will ensure that the plan remains focused, flexible and responsive in an ever-changing environment.

Shared services	Westmeath County Council is party to a number of Shared Service Agreements. They are listed in the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029 and some examples are outlined below: • Laois County Council - MyPay Shared Service • SEAI Partnership Agreement • SLA Kildare County Council – Climate Action Regional Office • SLA Laois County Council - Midlands Energy Agency • SLA WERLA - Waste Management • Road Management Office with Donegal County Council as lead authority • SLA - Scientific Assessment of Alternatives to Herbicide Use in the Maintenance of Public Amenity Open Spaces Project • LEO operates under a Service Level Agreement with Enterprise Ireland and the budget provides for the continued operation of LEO in 2026
Regional Issues including new developments and initiatives	Westmeath County Council works in partnership with others across a range of issues including: 1. Roscommon County Council to facilitate the orderly development of Athlone 2. Various Councils in the development of the Athlone Galway Greenway 3. Various Councils in response to unauthorised peat harvesting 4. Implementation of the Just Transition Programme with Failte Ireland, Bord na Mona, TUS and other Councils 5. Working with TUS to achieve educational and economic development objectives
Any other relevant information	Westmeath County Council is a forward-looking, ambitious and professional organisation dedicated to the improvement of the lives of our citizens. We work collaboratively to deliver high-quality, accessible services that enhance the quality of life for all who live, work, study, visit, raise a family or run a business in our county. We are focused on day to day services such as our libraries and the maintenance of the public realm, as well as large scale projects such as the Mullingar Regional Sports Centre. We are committed to continuous improvement and the implementation of strong governance structures.

Summary of past Scrutiny Report(s)

Westmeath County Council had no formal Stage 1 as during July 2018 a very comprehensive validation meeting was held in connection with the Performance Indicator report and, therefore, it was deemed that NOAC could proceed to a Stage 2 meeting in October 2018.

The information contained below is taken from the Scrutiny Report published following the abovementioned meeting and is a summary of the issues discussed, from that time.

- ▲ Housing – The NOAC Board commended the quick turnaround of vacancies in relation to housing.

Difficult mortgages - the Council explained that the HFA allowed them to offer Interest Only and Mortgage to Rent Schemes as a means to help residents in mortgage arrears. Now most of the loans are performing well.

Unsold Affordable housing units - the Council have leased them to an AHB.

Commercial Rates - The Council admitted that it had lost ground on performance on rates. Since 2014, the Council had to harmonise rates between rural and urban areas. Furthermore, as a result of the Valuation Office Revaluation Project, 55% got a reduction while 45% got an increase in the rate amount.
- ▲ Vacancies - A business incentive scheme, which looked at reducing the vacancy rates, was replaced by a Shop Front scheme where grants were offered up to €2,500 for 50% of work spent of improvement works to shop fronts.

Other sources of data

The below information highlights other sources of data from NOAC reports and any other reports, including media, deemed worthwhile.

NOAC Reports No 46 & 67- Local Authority and Regional Assembly Corporate Plan Cycle: 2019-2024

[Review of Local Authority and Regional Assembly Corporate Plans 2019-2024 \(46\)](#)

In November 2021, NOAC published its review of the corporate plans of local authorities and regional assemblies for the period 2019 - 2024. The purpose of the report is to review the adequacy of the plans and to assist with the further development of good practice in corporate planning. In the report, examples of good practice in relation to both the process of developing the plans, and the content of the plans are highlighted.

Under the process, areas considered for review included:

- ▲ The pre-plan consultation, which looks at how local authorities formulated the Corporate Plan, consulted with stakeholders and engaged with elected members.
- ▲ Review of the Corporate Plans. This investigated how local authorities proposed to review the progress of their Corporate Plans.
- ▲ Integration of the Corporate Plan with other policies and strategies, which examined the extent to which local authorities consulted other policy reports and strategies when devising their Corporate Plans.
- ▲ Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. Under this heading, it was examined as to how local authorities engaged with the issue of human rights.

Examining the contents of the Corporate Plans, the following were among the areas reviewed:

- ▲ Vision and Mission: Strategies and Objectives. This detailed local authorities' visions, mission statements and broad goals during the life of the plan. It focused on the setting of actions and goals to deliver these broad objectives and visions.
- ▲ Financial resourcing of the Corporate Plan and how risks to the delivery of the Corporate Plan can be examined, taking into account how Councils are dependent on voted capital funds from central government.
- ▲ Measuring and mitigating risk. This examines where local authorities depend on other external providers and other public bodies to successfully deliver certain services. This involves risk which can be mitigated through appropriate oversight, including service level agreements.

Section 1: Process, under the section of "Review of corporate plans", it is outlined that "Westmeath County Council has a useful section in its corporate plan titled "Achievements from Previous Corporate Plan 2015-2019" which gives a good indication of how future reviews can be undertaken and achievements recorded. Under a total of six headings (such as "1. Economic and Enterprise Development and "2. Social Inclusion and Community Participation"), it aligns these strategic priorities to actual achievements.

For example: "2. Social Inclusion and Community Participation: To facilitate the broadest possible participation by citizens in local decision making including the development of their communities and their county." Further, targeted and factual achievements made under the last corporate plan are also set out in full, providing a good degree of transparency, and demonstrating the benefit of creating a corporate plan which has specific deliverable actions. In framing its recent achievements in this way, the Council is making its work more relevant and compelling to citizens and interested groups. It also serves to make the corporate plan less dense and more easily understood."

Under the section of financial resourcing of the corporate plan, it outlines that "concerns were expressed by Westmeath County Council: Notwithstanding the ability of the Council to raise local funding through the Local Property Tax, Rates, and Development Contributions, the dependence of the local government system on funding from central government leaves it exposed to variations in the economic climate and central funding allocations."

Review of Implementation of Local Authority and Regional Assembly Corporate Plans 2019-2024 (67)

Following on from the above-mentioned review, NOAC's next step was to examine the implementation of those 2019-2024 corporate plans produced by the 31 local authorities and three regional assemblies. NOAC wished to evaluate how well local authorities and regional assemblies monitor the implementation of their corporate plans and how the process of monitoring and managing the implementation can be improved upon. The report was published in May 2024, with advance copies having issued to local authorities and regional assemblies.

The report is structured in three parts:

Part 1: Describes the methodologies used by the local authorities and regional assemblies to monitor implementation of the corporate plan.

Part 2: Assesses the progress reported on implementation of the measures contained in the plan.

Part 3: Considers two areas that were selected for more detailed analysis, namely social housing and human rights.

Under the heading of "Responsibility for Monitoring Implementation" the report explains that in "several local authorities, such as Westmeath, the corporate affairs department is responsible for co-ordinating the monitoring of implementation of the corporate plan, alongside other statutory reporting obligations."

NOAC Report 65 – Internal Audit in Local Authorities Report 2023

This report reviewed the general governance of the internal audit function in local authorities, which included an in-depth survey as well as a review of the recommendations of NOAC's 2018 Report and how those recommendations were implemented. NOAC made 17 recommendations in this report to address the issues identified.

In terms of Westmeath County Council, the following are the relevant details:

- ▲ Westmeath County Council is one of 11 identified in the category of small local authorities.
- ▲ Internal Audit is conducted in-house with one staff working in that area.

Relevant Recommendations

Recommendation 4 Applies to Westmeath County Council and 8 other local authorities.

All local authorities should ensure that there is a system in place to confirm the independence and objectivity of their internal audit function on an annual basis. The nine local authorities that do not have such a system in place must ensure that this is done as soon as possible.

Recommendation 6 Applies to Westmeath County Council and 14 other local authorities.

NOAC recommends that all local authorities conduct assessments of the adequacy of internal audit resources including staff skills on a regular basis, to ensure that they are functioning to the required level and to a high standard.

Recommendation 8 Applies to Westmeath and 20 other local authorities.

All local authorities must encourage existing staff to obtain appropriate professional qualifications and assign new staff to these functions who are either qualified or seeking to achieve qualification. It is critical that this recommendation be implemented as soon as possible in those local authorities who's Head of Internal Audit is not qualified or seeking to achieve qualification.

Recommendation 12 Applies to Westmeath County Council and seven other local authorities.

All local authorities must ensure examine/ update their risk assessments, particularly where a system or process has been replaced or amended given the unforeseen impacts that can occur.

Recommendation 16 Applies to Westmeath and all other local authorities except Clare.

The Institute of Internal Auditors recommends that an internal audit function must have an external assessment carried out at least every five years. All local authorities must address this as a matter of priority.

Recommendation 17 Applies to Westmeath and all other local authorities except Cavan, Clare, South Dublin, Meath and Wexford.

All local authorities should conduct compliance tests to ensure that the operation of the internal audit function against its stated function.

It should be noted that the information for the Internal Audit report was compiled from information provided by the local authority from a survey conducted by NOAC in 2023.

NOAC Report 24 - Customer Satisfaction Survey 2018-2020

In 2018, Ipsos MRBI was commissioned by NOAC to conduct a survey among the general public to establish their satisfaction with their Local Authority. A face-to-face in-home CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) methodology is utilised and quota controls ensured that participants are representative of the local authority population by age, gender and social class.

The third survey, completed in 2020, was conducted with what were considered the 10 smallest sized local authorities. Westmeath County Council was included in this survey.

Westmeath County Council performed extremely well across all the areas reviewed in the survey with above average scores for the below:

- ▲ Overall satisfaction: Westmeath County Council – 61% v National Average – 59%.
- ▲ Value for Money: Westmeath County Council – 31% v National Average – 29%

- ▲ Informed by local authority: Westmeath County Council – 69% v National Average – 43%. This was the highest score amongst all local authorities.
- ▲ Roads Maintenance: Westmeath County Council – 84% v National Average – 65%. Westmeath were the highest performing local authority within this category.
- ▲ Road Safety: Westmeath County Council – 88% v National Average – 74%. Westmeath were the highest performing local authority within this category.
- ▲ Doing a good job: Westmeath County Council – 71% v National Average – 52%. Again Westmeath achieved the highest score amongst all local authorities under this heading.

NOAC Report No 76 – Public Spending Code 2024

The Public Spending Code (PSC) was developed by the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform (DPENDPDR). The Code applies to both current and capital expenditure and to all public bodies in receipt of public funds. According to DPENDPDR, the Code brings together, in one place, details of the obligations of those responsible for spending public money. As local authority funding derives from a number of sources, including grants from several Government Departments, it was decided that the Chief Executives of individual local authorities should be responsible for carrying out the quality assurance requirements and that their reports should be submitted to NOAC for incorporation in a composite report for the local government sector.

The Quality Assurance reporting requirements consists of the following five steps:

1. Local authorities should draw up an inventory of projects/programmes at the different stages of the Project Life Cycle, in respect of all capital and current expenditure projects to a value greater than €0.5m.

2. Confirm publication on the local authority's website of summary information on all procurements in excess of €10m related to projects in progress or completed in the year under review and provide a link to the relevant website location.
3. Complete the seven specified checklists. Only one of each type of checklist per local authority is required and not one per each project/programme. The completion of the checklists is to be based on an appropriate sample of the projects/areas of expenditure relevant to that checklist.
4. Carry out a more in-depth review of selected projects/programmes such that, over a 3-5 year period, every stage of the project life-cycle and every scale of project will be subject to a closer examination. Revenue projects selected for in-depth review must represent a minimum of 1% of the total value of all revenue projects in the inventory, while the requirement in respect of capital projects is 5% of the total value of all capital projects in the inventory.
5. Complete a short summary report consisting of the inventory, procurement reference and checklists referenced in steps 1 to 3 and the local authority's judgment as to the adequacy of the appraisal/planning, implementation or review work that it examined as part of step 4, the reasons why it formed that judgment and its proposals to remedy any inadequacies found during the entire quality assurance process.

In the case of Westmeath County Council it complied with all five steps as highlighted above including providing links to the online Publication of Summary Information of all Procurements in Excess of €10 million.

Particular points of note were:

- ▲ Westmeath County Council had one procurement in excess of €10m in 2024, totalling €22,114,430.
- ▲ Design & Construction of 62 Housing Units at 4 sites in Co. Westmeath.

	Expenditure being Considered - Greater than €0.5m (Capital and Current)			
Local Authority	Current Expenditure Amount in Reference Year	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Non Grant)	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Grant)	Projected Lifetime Expenditure
Westmeath County Council	€ -	€ -	€ -	€256,836,400

	Expenditure being Incurred - Greater than €0.5m (Capital and Current)				
Local Authority	Current Expenditure Amount in Reference Year	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Non Grant)	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Grant)	Cumulative Expenditure to-date	Projected Lifetime Expenditure (Capital Only)
Westmeath County Council	€84,923,959	€16,399,931	€ -	€116,313,250	€222,140,000

	Projects/Programmes Completed or discontinued in the reference year - Greater than €0.5m (Capital and Current)			
Local Authority	Current Expenditure Amount in Reference Year	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Non Grant)	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Grant)	Final Outturn Expenditure
Westmeath County Council	€ -	€28,020,724	€ -	€56,562,424

		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
H1	Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	1.17	0.85	1.66	0.75	0.45	0.59	0.61	0.64	0.79	1.15	0.73	0.81	0.40	0.53	N/A	N/A	1.87	1.90	1.19	0.80
H2	% of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	1.32	2.81	1.2	3.03	2.28	3.16	2.38	3.18	1.87	3.15	1.26	2.77	0.43	2.73	0.65	3.02	1.45	3.50	0.90	3.45
H3a	Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	34.39	33.72	25.48	35.22	29.97	34.44	21.98	32.69	15.14	28.17	8.06	27.75	6.80	28.90	8.67	20.90	10.00	22.56	18.47	31.78
H3b	Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	€15,713.76	€28,347.05	€22,553.68	€21,886.04	€20,937.09	€19,653.39	€16901.23	€19,065.30	€17,220.47	€18,336.85	€13,347.39	€18,590.28	€11,401.74	€17,160.60	€12,551.65	€12,551.65	€13,905.89	€10,521.94	€9,887.07	€9,931.70
H4	Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	€1,064.09	€1,493.19	€991.56	€1,297.48	€917.37	€1,150.13	€775.07	€1,119.82	€695.47	€1,168.99	€602.21	€1,147.45	€1,066.64	€1,311.82	€647.87	€969.12	€550.39	€732	€4,075.28	€930.54
H5	Inspections (Dwellings inspected) carried out in year as % of registrations	17.87	17.34	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available	7.23	6.73	9.02	9.93	7.61	7.39	10.71	4.96	4.53	4.36	12.33	5.64	14.04	6.51
H6	Number of adults in emergency accommodation that are long-term homeless as a percentage of the total number of homeless adults in emergency accommodation at end of year	36.92	57.61	40.0	55.58	54.55	55.55	40.00	27.62	66.67	61.59	41.59	61.58	47.37	54.38	38.89	58.46	41.67	45.27	5.26	30.34
H7 A (1)	Total number of houses retrofitted in the year	109	78.87	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H7 A (2)	The number of houses that achieved a BER rating of B2 or above in the year	109	74.68	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H7 A (3)	The number of heat pumps installed in those houses in the year.	107	70.97	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H7 B	Total annual energy savings in MWH from houses retrofitted in the year	2,256.3	1,150.43	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
H7 C	Total carbon emission reduction tCo2 from houses retrofitted in the year	801.7	334.72	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
R1a	% Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	99.40	98	100	88.48	95	91	94.3	77	99.18	98	100	99	100	83	100	98	42	68	22.32	53.83
R1b	% Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	60.56	37.41	54.54	36.13	58.85	30.90	56.6	31.19	53.37	38.28	46	37.58	48	28	44	31	10	20	2	24
R1b	% Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	33.3	27.93	38.14	29.63	26.76	26.05	30.2	24	25.09	23.08	26	23.39	24	20	12	18	6.0	11	2	14.52
R1c	% Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	39.24	23.14	30.71	23.65	25.94	21.40	17.8	17.66	18.92	17.67	10	15.19	11	14	10	12	5.0	8	0	11.18
R1d	% Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	26.81	19.38	24.72	18.85	21.88	15.38	20.9	13.93	19.84	14.23	12	12.42	7	8	8	13	2.0	5	0	10.21
R2a	KM Regional Road strengthened using road improvement grants	9.7	13.5	8.4	11.15	7.5	13.4	8.6	14.7	10.60	13.17	12.5	13.4	6.90	10.6	7.8	9.9	11.9	10.2	N/A	N/A
R2b	KM Regional road resealed using road maintenance grants	17.8	19.3	12.7	14.4	10.9	19.9	13.8	19.4	14.90	14.27	11	15.3	6.00	12.2	4.4	11.3	5.9	8.32	N/A	N/A
R3	% Motor tax transactions performed online	76.70	81.38	77.26	81.1	84.29	86.18	77.11	81.52	63.13	77.10	59.98	69.15	56.11	65.95	52.83	63.87	45.75	56.6	41.34	50.86
W1	% private schemes with water quality in compliance	98.61	98.63	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available	98.89	97.50	98.69	97.06	100.00	97.70	100.00	97.77	100.00	97.97	97.90	97.90
W2	% of registered schemes monitored	100.00	83.45	100.00	83.05	96.49	79.87	91.23	71.01	100.00	73.43	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
E1	% households availing of a 3-bin service	72.69	94.13	41.09	87.91	36.64	89.36	35.19	89.73	11.51	48.36	8.66	43.91	5.51	39.43	4.75	37.71	4.48	22.50	4.42	28.65
E2	Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year	19.87	10.34	50.75	10.81	33.93	10.82	28.02	10.38	21.78	9.28	12.78	9.10	11.13	9.79	17.28	9.91	14.54	7.98	N/A	N/A
E3	% area unpolluted or litter free	33	16	30	20	22	22	14	22	10.00	15	12	19	4	10	5	13	3	14	1	10.93
E4	Percentage of schools that have been awarded/ renewed green flag status	27	35.09	21.59	29.46	21	34.80	28	41.83	37.78	47.96	37.78	51.41	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
E5	Cumulative percentage energy savings achieved by year end	-33.10	-38.79	-28.32	-35.94	NO data available	No data available	NO data available	No data available	18.68	27.81	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
E6	Total billable wattage of the public lighting system	3,310	5,332	4,171	5,740	3,829	5,942	4,797	6,209	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
E71a	Does the local authority have designated (FTE) climate action Coordinator	YES	97%	NO	61%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
E71b	Does the local authority have designated (FTE) Climate Action Officer	NO	81%	NO	29%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
E7 2	Does the local authority have a climate action team	YES	77%	YES	87%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P1	New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	16.61	22.39	12.50	18.30	12.14	16.97	12.86	15.28	13.69	23.90	14.58	16.75	15.58	17.20	3.53	19.42	13.01	24	12.02	21.81
P2	% of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	70.83	75.72	80.0	73.16	64.71	71.17	82.35	73.13	68.42	73.07	68.75	76.94	87.50	77.72	78.57	77.60	50.00	74.34	72.73	66.63
P3	Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	107.66	3.27	48.75	3.13	23	3.60	29.06	3.74	17.90	2.74	16.14	3.03	5.56	2.41	4.53	2.87	2.24	2.61	3.30	2.88
P4	Cost per capita of the Planning Service	€28.16	€35.97	€26.56	€33.54	€28.31	€33.37	€27.40	€31.47	€25.85	€30.27	€24.89	€29.24	€25.86	€28.31	€21.45	€26.96	€26.69	€26.78	€32.46	€28.04
P5 A	The percentage of applications for fire safety certificates received in the year that were decided (granted or refused) within two months of their receipt	97.70	52.11	96.15	46.95	95.15	51.54	91.46	55.44	94.44	52.52	100	56.37	97.62	55.94	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P5 B	The percentage of applications for fire safety certificates received in the year that were decided (granted or refused) within an extended period agreed with the applicant	2.30	36.28	3.85	42.25	4.85	37.16	8.54	34.33	5.56	40.08	0	35.70	2.38	37.71	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
F1	Cost per capita of Fire Service	€36.64	€45.96	€36.15	€42.48	€30.38	€44.65	€33.14	€44.81	€32.15	€44.65	€33.99	€45.39	€31.36	€43.04	€33.35	€42.10	€31.65	€45.57	€32.85	€44.56
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (FT/PT)	06:28	05:56	06:01	05:31	06:07	05:19	06:24	05:24	06:04	05:30	05:34	05:34	06:28	05:49	06:52	5:64	6.30	5:65	6.20	5.62
F3	% of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	15.56	52.83	24.26	52.65	30.98	56.17	24.88	55.30	28.50	55.14	29.06	52.92	27.67	40.45	27.29	40.65	25.73	39.32	31.73	45.02
L1a	No. of Library visits per head of population	3.16	2.70	2.19	2.09	0.8	0.86	1.27	1.05	3.38	3.57	3.1	3.58	3.33	3.56	3.46	3.61	3.34	3.68	3.60	3.82
L1b	No. of Items borrowed per head of population	3.80	3.15	2.46	2.70	1.56	2.07	1.55	2.19	2.52	3.14	2.32	2.88	2.41	2.90	3.91	3.8275	3.58	3.82	N/A	N/A
L2	Cost of Library Service per capita	€31.32	€38.87	€30.01	€36.68	€28.29	€36.92	€28.25	35.95	€29.52	€34.94	€28.79	€33.98	€27.78	€31.00	€27.44	€30.05	€27.63	€30.04	€27.89	€29.60
Y1	% of local schools involved in Comhairle na nÓg	84.62	68.16	100	64.70	100	63.25	100	63.29	84.62	68.30	84.62	80	69.23	69.04	100.00	68.07	100.00	88.46	38.46	62.01
Y2	Number of organisations included in the County Register at year end and the proportion of those organisations that opted to be part of the Social Inclusion College within the PPN	20.82	16.21	21.25	16.64	21.66	15.97	22.64	16.33	23.07	16.82	25.12	17.90	27	20	27.96	19	27.32	19.78	N/A	N/A
C1	WTE staff per 1,000 population	5.16	6.16	5.38	5.94	5.15	5.89	4.85	6.06	4.78	5.95	4.71	5.82	4.57	5.70	4.55	5.64	5.07	5.58	5.27	5.63
C2a	% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave in year	2.87	3.77	3.22	3.58	3.08	2.89	3.21	3.01	2.81	3.71	3.09	3.74	3.41	3.74	1.68	3.69	2.20	3.48	2.46	3.37
C2b	% of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.39	0.32	0.35	0.32	0.25	0.19	0.24	0.20	0.41	0.36	0.38	0.33	0.44	0.33	0.23	0.33	0.37	0.33	0.34	0.35
C3	LA website page views per 1,000 population (per capita from 2021)	11.48	13.36	14.58	13.65	15.00	13.60	13.29	15.56	10,278	16,572	8,760	15,520.46	8,777	14,495.46	8,131	12,422	8,651	11,666	7,322	9,651
C4	Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	€3,405.16	€3,948.63	€3,340.91	€3,729.33	€3,388.98	€3,521.62	€3,306.31	€3,457.02	€3,608.91	€3,060.84	€3,368.22	€2,894.57	€3,400.63	€3,048.41	€3,115.30	€2,680.80	€3,051.73	€2,925	€2,654.00	€2,932
C5	Overall cost of ICT as a proportion of Revenue expenditure	1.81	1.86	1.93	1.71	1.82	1.71	1.57	1.52	2.27	1.78	2.11	1.75	N/A	N/a	N/A	N/a	N/A	N/a	N/A	N/a

		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
M1	Revenue Expenditure per Capita in year	€969.77	€1,305.56	€934.62	€1,205.89	€1,043.43	€1,308.21	€1,111.03	€1,419.01	€824.67	€1,059.50	€813.40	€978.91	€714.87	€897.89	€749.60	€842.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
M2a	% Commercial Rates Collected in year	96.0	88.8	95.00	88.1	90.00	83.4	81.0	76	85.00	87.00	83.0	86	81.0	83.6	81.0	84.4	79.0	80.19	73	73.06
M2b	% Rent & Annuities Collected in year	97.0	87.2	98.00	88.1	98.00	88.8	98.0	88.3	98.00	89.80	97.0	89	97.0	89	96.0	88.0	95.0	88	93	86.55
M2c	% Housing Loans Collected in year	102.0	85.5	98.00	82.6	100.00	81.6	102.0	79.4	99.00	78.00	97.0	75	89.0	74	85.0	70.0	73.0	73	54	67.23
M3	Per capita total cost of settled claims	€9.76	€12.21	€8.82	€11.31	€6.90	€11.05	€10.30	€12.21	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
M4	Total payroll costs as a % of revenue expenditure	€34.76	€33.30	€33.89	€32.35	€30.67	€31.83	€27.60	26.75	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J1	LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	1.56	0.41	2.11	0.67	2.12	0.59	-0.01	-0.30	1.35	0.64	0.68	0.75	1.03	0.68	1.11	0.70	1.72	0.66	0.53	0.73
J2A	The number of trading online voucher applications approved by the Local Enterprise Office in the year per 100,000 of population	0.34	0.33	0.48	0.36	1.54	0.87	3.20	2.64	0.43	0.25	0.27	0.23	0.30	0.25	0.26	0.24	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J2B	The number of those trading online vouchers that were drawn down in the year per 100,000 of population	0.18	0.14	0.22	0.17	1.04	0.52	1.32	0.93	0.14	0.10	0.14	0.11	0.21	0.11	0.14	0.14	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J3	The number of participants who received mentoring during the year per 100,000 of population	4.21	2.76	4.52	2.37	5.34	2.76	5.73	3.30	2.78	2.19	2.33	1.98	3.93	1.74	1.09	1.59	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J4A	Does the local authority have a current tourism strategy	YES	28	YES	28	YES	29	YES	28	YES	28	YES	28	N/A	29	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J4B	Does the local authority have a designated Tourism Officer?	YES	30	YES	29	YES	29	YES	30	YES	30	YES	28	N/A	27	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J5	The spend on local economic development by the local authority per head of population	€104.03	€163.41	€102.42	€141.21	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A



Mr. Barry Kehoe,
Chief Executive,
Westmeath County Council,
Áras An Chontae,
Mount Street,
Mullingar,
Co. Westmeath,
N91 FH4N.

8th July 2025

Dear Mr. Kehoe,

The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) invites you to participate in a meeting to discuss the performance of your local authority as part of NOAC's individual review of each local authority, or Scrutiny Process.

The meeting will take place on Tuesday, 23 September 2025 at 11.00 a.m. in the Custom House, North Wall Quay, Dublin 1, D01 W6X0.

At the meeting, you will be invited to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes in duration, and the opening statement will be followed by questions from the members of the NOAC board. You may bring your management team to the meeting, if you so wish.

Information and Material Requested:

Please –

- ▲ Forward the following, not later than 5.30 p.m. on 16 September 2025, by email to info@noac.ie:
 - The name(s), title(s), email and mobile number contact details, of those attending at the Custom House, or virtually.
 - A copy of the opening statement (in MS word format)
- ▲ Confirm receipt of this letter and your availability to attend, by end of day 29 July 2025, by email to info@noac.ie.

Meeting proceedings

The below information provides an outline of the procedures of the Scrutiny Meetings as agreed with the County and City Managers Association (CCMA).

- ▲ The Chair will begin a formal introduction process of each NOAC member and local authority attendee.
- ▲ The Chair will provide a short background on NOAC, the Scrutiny Process and the order of the meeting.
- ▲ The Chief Executive will be asked by the Chair to give their opening statement as provided in advance of the meeting. A time limit for the delivery of the opening statement of five minutes will be strictly adhered to.

- ▲ The Chair will ask the Chief Executive if the local authority considers there are any issues NOAC should be made aware of.
- ▲ The Chair will direct each NOAC board member in attendance to ask questions and the Chief Executive and/or their team will be given time to respond.
- ▲ The Chair will open the floor to the NOAC board to ask any follow up or general questions they may have.
- ▲ If a local authority is unable to provide a complete response to a question, it will be noted and the local authority will subsequently be contacted via email to provide the response. The local authority will provide the response(s) within ten working days of the email from the Secretariat in a word document format.
- ▲ In the case that a meeting runs beyond two hours, the Chair will offer the local authority the option to take a short break of 15 minutes.
- ▲ The Chair will close the meeting.

Information on NOAC and other arrangements

The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) is the national independent oversight body for the local government sector in Ireland. It was established in July 2014 under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to provide independent oversight of the local government sector.

NOAC's functions are wide ranging, covering all local authority activities and involving the scrutiny of performance generally and financial performance specifically. NOAC also has a role in supporting best practice, overseeing implementation of national local government policy and monitoring and evaluating implementation of corporate plans, adherence to service level agreements and public service reform by local government bodies.

A core function of NOAC is to review the individual performance of local authorities in accordance with its statutory functions. This key process allows NOAC to provide a comprehensive overview of the functioning of local authorities to the public, both positive and negative, and can allow for exemplars of good practice to be identified and used to share with other local authorities.

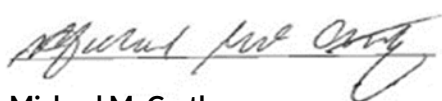
It should be noted that NOAC reserves the right to record and/or livestream Scrutiny Meetings and a record of the meeting may also be kept via a transcript and/or summary report.

Such information may be uploaded to the NOAC website, which is freely accessible to the public, and that attendance by local authority staff at the meeting will be deemed as consent for that content to be used by NOAC.

For further details on the process of the Scrutiny Meeting, a Protocol document, which was agreed between NOAC and the CCMA, is provided with this letter of invite.

For any further details on NOAC, please see the NOAC website (www.noac.ie) or contact the NOAC Secretariat at info@noac.ie.

Yours sincerely,



Michael McCarthy
Chair of the National Oversight and Audit Commission

Chief Executive Westmeath County Council - Opening Statement

Good morning, and thank you for this opportunity to address the National Oversight and Audit Commission. On behalf of Westmeath County Council, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the NOAC scrutiny process and acknowledge the valuable role NOAC plays in promoting accountability and best practice across the local government sector.

The intervening years since our last scrutiny engagement in October 2018 as documented in NOAC Report No. 33 have brought substantial changes to our organisation. We have increased our activities in the areas of Housing and Climate Action and we have withdrawn further from Water Services. These and many other changes are reflected in our Corporate Plan 2024-2029, which was approved by our elected members in February 2025. This plan provides a clear strategic framework that guides our service delivery and resource allocation across all functional areas.

We continue to work diligently to implement our various statutory functions and deliver quality services to the citizens of Westmeath. Our performance in key areas demonstrates this commitment - we maintain one of the lowest housing vacancy rates nationally, have consistently strong debt collection rates, and our "My Open Library" initiative has proved highly successful with plans for expansion to Athlone, Kilbeggan and Kinnegad.

However, I must acknowledge the ongoing challenges we face, particularly in workforce management. Despite our best efforts, staff retention and recruitment remain significant concerns across multiple departments. The competitive employment market and specialised skill requirements in local government create persistent pressures. We are actively working to maintain an adequate workforce through innovative recruitment strategies and staff development programmes.

I am pleased to report that we are nearing completion of our Strategic Workforce Plan, which represents our commitment to building an adaptable, skilled workforce capable of meeting both current service demands and future challenges. Implementation will require careful prioritisation, focusing on critical service delivery needs, statutory compliance, and positions supported by external funding opportunities.

Of particular concern is the escalating cost of capital projects, which poses genuine risks to our financial sustainability. Construction inflation has created uncertainty in project delivery and budget management. We continue to monitor these risks closely and implement appropriate mitigation measures to protect the Council's financial position.

In conclusion, I am confident that Westmeath County Council is in a strong position. We have built organisational resilience, demonstrated our capability in service delivery, and positioned ourselves well to meet future challenges. Whilst we face ongoing pressures, our commitment to good governance, strategic planning, and continuous improvement ensures we remain capable of serving our community effectively and efficiently.

I look forward to our discussion today and to receiving NOAC's insights and recommendations for our continued development.

Thank you.



National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)
An Coimisiún Náisiúnta Maoirseachta & Iniúcháireachta

Postal Address: Custom House, Dublin 1, D01 W6X0.

Website: www.noac.ie

Email: info@noac.ie

